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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 001056

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZIMBABWEAN INSIDERS BRIEF AMBASSADORS MCGEE AND
BOST ON POLITICAL STALEMATE AND ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) MDC-T negotiator and treasurer Elton Mangoma, civil-society leader Lovemore Madhuku, and Harare Mayor Muchadeyi Masunda on November 24 briefed Ambassador McGee and U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Bost on the political and economic crises facing Zimbabwe. Friendly members of the diplomatic corps joined the two U.S. Ambassadors for a working lunch in which analytical assessments and policy options were discussed. Topics of discussion included the reaction by the MDC-T to the recently concluded emergency SADC Summit in South Africa, the leverage South Africa could apply in breaking the political impasse, President Mugabe's mindset, the need for public activism, and the state of what remains of Zimbabwe's formal economy. END SUMMARY.

MDC-T Frustrated by African Neighbors

12. (C) MDC-T negotiator and treasurer, Elton Mangoma, reported that the MDC-T leadership was shocked at the lack of support it received from African neighbors at the SADC Summit on November 16. The MDC-T had expected that the majority of SADC nations would see the equity in its proposals and in the aftermath of the summit felt that SADC had not had the courage to stand up to Mugabe. Particularly disappointing was the passive role played by South African President Motlanthe who, according to Mangoma, had come close to apologizing after the summit and admitted that SADC had "handled it badly." This situation was leading to doubts within the MDC-T leadership over whether a future South African President Jacob Zuma would take a discernibly stronger position in dealing with Mugabe than that of former President Thabo Mbeki. Mangoma said that if South Africa put real political and economic pressure on Zimbabwe the impasse

could be "resolved in a matter of days."

¶3. (C) Mangoma's post mortem explanation of events at the SADC summit was that Southern African nations viewed giving genuine power to the MDC-T as setting a dangerous precedent. Nearly all of them remain one-party states that in many cases sprung from national independence movements. The possibility of an upstart party taking power in their own countries was seen as threatening. He said discussion of democracy by these leaders was merely paying lip-service to the U.S. and others.

¶4. (C) When asked why Mugabe would not reach an accommodation with his rivals * genuine or otherwise * merely to receive international assistance, Mangoma described his perception of Mugabe's decision making. He said after nearly three decades of rule Mugabe is completely immersed in power games, and he "does not worry about how many people perish along the way." One thing he still cares about is the perception by other African states of his legitimacy to rule Zimbabwe based on his role in the liberation struggle. He enjoys being seen as fighting for a cause, and standing up to the West has become his cause.

Civil Society Trying to Get Out the Numbers

¶5. (C) Lovemore Madhuku, the president of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a prominent civil society

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organization that has been an organizer of peaceful protests, told us that the failure of the talks to make any progress has led to a loss of hope for many ordinary Zimbabweans. Additionally, ongoing negotiations have dissipated much of the momentum to generate more public activism and organize large protests. Madhuku said such a strategy would require a "grand political decision" from the MDC, which for the moment remains focused on generating outside pressure on the regime (from SADC, the AU and the UN) rather than mobilizing grassroots support for building up internal pressure in Zimbabwe. In Madhuku's view, both the negotiations and the external strategy have failed to generate sufficient pressure on the regime to force change. He said that such pressure would have to come from the people.

¶6. (C) Madhuku explained many Zimbabweans are unwilling to participate in large anti-government demonstrations out of fear that the government will harshly suppress demonstrations with violence. He has been organizing regular protests but has not been able to mobilize people in the thousands because of lack of resources. Specifically, his organization cannot provide people with bus fare to come to downtown Harare or Bulawayo, which was why demonstrations have not exceeded a few hundred at a time. This week the NCA has scheduled marches in Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Masvingo and Gweru. He asked for our assistance in financing mass protests. He was encouraged to build a coalition of like-minded Zimbabwean organizations that were inclined to actively protest for an end to the crisis situation.

Last Legs of Formal Economy Buckling

¶7. (SBU) Harare Mayor Muchadeyi Masunda, who sits on the board of directors of several prominent Zimbabwean companies, revealed that now even the largest Zimbabwean companies are facing collapse. Masunda said that Bindura Nickel was being forced to shut down, ZimPlats was dramatically scaling down its operations despite its South African ownership, gold miners were no longer being paid by the Reserve Bank to whom they were obligated to sell their gold, and even financial stalwart Old Mutual Zimbabwe was suffering as it had been told to shift 35 percent of its stock market holdings to

government investments.

¶18. (U) Meanwhile, ordinary Zimbabweans and the informal economy that has absorbed many people previously employed in the formal sector are being sustained by remittances from the diaspora.

¶19. (C) On politics, Masunda felt that cracks were widening in ZANU-PF and party dissatisfaction was high. He specifically cited the recent defection of some ZAPU leaders as indicative of sentiment within ZANU-PF ranks. Masunda said that Mugabe "knows that he's screwed up and the only thing that is keeping him going is that he cannot countenance the thought of being tried internationally for crimes against humanity."

Like-Minded Think Alike

¶10. (C) Ambassador McGee hosted lunch with Ambassadors from like-minded nations, specifically heads of mission from Australia, Germany, the European Commission, and the UK. The consensus was that South Africa wields the most external leverage over Zimbabwe and needs to be pressured to use that leverage to help deliver political reforms in Zimbabwe. The

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argument most likely to resonate is that stability in Zimbabwe is in South Africa's own best interest.

¶11. (C) Domestically, the group felt that the MDC-T had not done enough to build coalitions and present a unified front. The MDC-T needs to mend fences with the MDC-M and reach out to disaffected and former ZANU-PF members, including Simba Makoni and Dumiso Dabengwa. The MDC also needs to join forces with civil society to coordinate efforts to mobilize large numbers that would signal domestically and internationally that Zimbabweans have had enough.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) There was general agreement expressed by all interlocutors that two kinds of pressure could enhance the chances for democratic transition in Zimbabwe: pressure on Mugabe from South Africa and a unified and forceful opposition mobilization inside the country. Unfortunately, neither appears imminent. On the one hand, South African President Motlanthe reportedly blames Tsvangirai for the stalemate in Zimbabwe. On the other, Tsvangirai's return to Zimbabwe does not appear imminent and there is no evidence the MDC-T has learned to appreciate the usefulness of outreach to rivals within Zimbabwe's opposition movement.
END COMMENT.

McGee